

Town Officials Say Roundabout Is Unsafe As Proposed

By SUSANNA SHOHAM

Selectmen will tell the state highway engineers to take their plans for a "roundabout" at the Lincoln St. and Congress St. (Route 14) intersection back to the drawing board. The land taking at the northeast corner of the intersection, selectmen said, would create an unsafe situation for 1 homeowner.

At a public meeting Monday night attended by town officials, department heads, Duxbury's state representative Francis Marini, and almost 40 residents, selectmen said they felt a roundabout — a mini traffic circle — could work in this dangerous intersection. The area also receives traffic from the nearby exit ramps from Route 3. However, they were not satisfied with the state's plan to take land from a corner of the intersection in front of a house at 134 Congress St., placing the house only 20 feet from the curb. The roundabout proposal, presented to the town by a state engineer at a public meeting 2 weeks ago, calls for installing raised triangular islands in the middle of all 4 roads to direct traffic around a circular, textured concrete island in the middle of the intersection. The corners of the intersection would be widened by land takings to allow traffic to flow around the circle. The

proposal also includes a truck prohibition on Lincoln St., which heavy trucks currently use as a route to Marshfield.

Selectman Friend Weiler said: "We've got to go back to the state and tell them we're disappointed in their solution. The state's going to have to do something to satisfy the property owners."

Weiler suggested the state either pay for moving the house at 134 Congress St. owned by Laurence and Linda Boisvert further back onto their 2 acre lot, or take and compensate the Boisverts for their house. The Boisverts have lived in their home for 20 years.

Selectmen Chairman Margaret Kearney agreed with Weiler, saying she would not accept the roundabout solution as proposed because of the impact to the Boisverts. Kearney said the safety of the Boisvert family was a "prime concern," but added that the safety of the public driving through the intersection was also important. She suggested that if the state would not pay for taking or moving the Boisvert's home, then officials might have to go to Town Meeting for money, because this is a safety issue that affects all of Duxbury.

The newest selectman, Andre Martecchini, who is a highway engineer, said there was not enough room at this intersection for the state's plan as proposed. "The state's plan is just not fitting in this little envelope they're trying to put it in...I don't think we can proceed with it" without a better solution for the property owners, he said. "My recommendation is to respond to the state saying we can go along with the idea if we can somehow find more room for the intersection" and lessen the impact to the homes.

Selectmen said they will give the state their response and ask the engineers to redraft the plans.

The state engineers have said that 10,500 vehicles pass through this intersection daily and 4,600 vehicles use Lincoln St. Many accidents occur at this intersection and are often caused by traffic turning on to Lincoln St. The roundabout, while it has not been used in Massachusetts yet, has been installed in 198 locations in Seattle and has been successful as a "traffic calming" solution, said Department of Public Works Director Walter Tonaszuck. The roundabout slows traffic down as it passes through an intersection. Tonaszuck also said the state would be willing to remove the roundabout if it was not working for the town.

Rep. Marini told residents and officials at the meeting that he would help in any way he could. He also said that he has observed the problems at this intersection day and night while campaigning with election signs.

"My job is to do what ever the town of Duxbury wants to do, regardless of what Mass. Highways wants," Marini said. "The worst thing that can happen is that it doesn't work. If, after 6 months, it doesn't work, then we'll have another public hearing about it."

Many residents supported the roundabout. Donald Kelly of Franklin St. said he was skeptical about the proposal at first but he has since changed his mind.

"I think the roundabout will slow traffic down," he said. "I think, in general, it will be a good thing."

Laurence Boisvert was dismayed that no other plan has been proposed for this intersection in the 2 decades he's

lived there. "The thing that gets me is that no one tried anything there other than a blinking light," he said. "Let's make an attempt to try something and not say this (roundabout) is it or nothing." Boisvert suggested 4-way stops there or speed bumps. Tonaszuck said the state would not allow either of these solutions because Congress St. is a state route. "We can't put stop signs on a state highway," he said.